

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

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STADIS//////////

FOR NEA/ARN DRAPER

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, SY
SUBJ: SYRIAN JEWRY

1. DURING CONVERSATION WITH DAOUDY JUNE 8 I ASKED WHETHER SYRIA HAD HAD OPPORTUNITY TO CONSIDER FURTHER LIST OF 52 NAMES WHICH AMB. MURPHY HAD LEFT WITH HIM AND WITH PRESIDENT ASSAD DURING HIS FAREWELL CALLS. DAOUDY'S RESPONSE WAS NEGATIVE. HE SAID THAT IN HIS VIEW NOW WAS NOT THE RIGHT TIME TO TAKE A DECISION. DAOUDY ADDED: "EVEN IF WE HAD BEEN READY TO LET ONE OR TWO OR FIVE GO WE WOULD NOT DO SO NOW THAT ISRAEL HAS LAUNCHED A CAMPAIGN AGAINST US." WHAT HE WAS REFERRING TO WAS THE DAY OF SOLIDARITY WITH SYRIAN JEWRY RECENTLY ANNOUNCED IN ISRAEL. HE SAID HE WAS NOT QUESTIONING THE HUMANITARIAN MOTIVES OF THE US IN RAISING THIS ISSUE BUT WE MUST UNDERSTAND THAT SYRIA COULD NOT ACT UNDER THE PRESSURE OF SUCH ACTIONS IN ISRAEL.

2. I REMINDED DAOUDY THAT THIS QUESTION CONTINUED TO BE AN IMPORTANT ONE FOR THE UNITED STATES AND ONE IN WHICH PRESIDENT CARTER WAS PERSONALLY INTERESTED. I SAID THAT I COULD NOT AGREE THAT NOW WAS NOT AN APPROPRIATE TIME. SINCE THIS ISSUE WILL CONTINUE TO HAVE AN EFFECT ON OUR
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BILATERAL RELATIONS, WE WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY BE RAISING IT AGAIN. DAOUDY INDICATED HE UNDERSTOOD AND RECALLED THAT PRESIDENT CARTER HAD MENTIONED THE SUBJECT IN HIS LAST LETTER. HE SAID THAT SYRIA CONTINUES TO KEEP THE QUESTION UNDER CONSIDERATION.

3. IN MEETING WITH TOUTAH EARLIER THIS WEEK I DELIVERED TO

HIM THE REMAINING CORRECTED PETITIONS AND SUGGESTED AGAIN THAT HE DELIVER ALL THE PETITIONS OR AT LEAST THE FULL LIST OF NAMES OFFICIALLY TO COL. MESSAOUD. WITH THREE MEMBERS OF JEWISH COMMUNITY COUNCIL ALSO PRESENT, WE DISCUSSED PROS AND CONS OF THIS APPROACH AND TOUTAH FINALLY AGREED TO PRESENT THE LIST TO MESSAOUD.

4. COMMENT: AS DEPARTMENT IS AWARE, DAOUDY HAS ALWAYS BEEN UNCOMFORTABLE DEALING WITH THIS ISSUE AND HAS TAKEN IT UP ONLY BECAUSE HE HAS BEEN OBLIGED TO BY HIS POSITION. I WAS NOT SURPRISED BY HIS REPLY AND RECALL THAT TOUTAH HAD SERIOUS MISGIVINGS ABOUT US PUSHING AHEAD AT THIS TIME. WE ALSO HAVE REPORTS THAT DAOUDY IS BEING CONSIDERED FOR REASSIGNMENT AS SYRIA'S AMBASSADOR TO LONDON. IT IS IN CHARACTER THAT HE WOULD AVOID FORCING A DECISION ON AN UNPLEASANT SUBJECT WHILE HIS FUTURE STATUS WAS UNDER CONSIDERATION.

5. I COULD NOT BE SURE WHETHER DAOUDY WAS SPEAKING FOR PRESIDENT AL-ASSAD OR GIVING HIS PERSONAL EVALUATION (THOUGH I SUSPECT THE LATTER), BUT IN EITHER CASE WE SHOULD NOT BE DISCOURAGED. ASSAD AND DAOUDY HAVE BOTH TAKEN THE POINT THAT THIS ISSUE IS A BILATERAL ONE MOTIVATED BY A HUMANITARIAN CONCERN, AND ASSAD HAS REPEATEDLY STRESSED HIS DESIRE TO IMPROVE BILATERAL RELATIONS. AS LONG AS WE KEEP THE QUESTION ON THIS BASIS, I BELIEVE WE HAVE A GOOD CHANCE FOR LONG TERM SUCCESS. IT CONFIDENTIAL

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MIGHT BE HELPFUL IN THIS REGARD IF OUR NEW AMBASSADOR CAME ARMED WITH ANOTHER PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT CARTER REITERATING OUR POSITION ON THE MARRIAGE QUESTION AND LINKING IT TO THE OVERALL IMPROVEMENT OF OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS WHICH BOTH PRESIDENTS WANT TO SEE REGARDLESS OF OUR DIFFERENCES ON THE PEACE PROCESS. REPETITION, PARTICULARLY AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS, SEEMS TO HAVE A SALUBRIOUS EFFECT HERE. I CANNOT DISCOUNT THE POSSIBILITY THAT IN SPITE OF ASSAD'S STATED POSITION, THE SYRIANS ARE TEMPTED TO USE THE JEWISH QUESTION AS A REWARD FOR SERVICES RENDERED IN THE PEACE PROCESS. WE SHOULD CONTINUE TO DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO DISCOURAGE THIS ATTITUDE. I RECOGNIZE THAT ALL CONCERNED ARE ANXIOUS TO SEE PROMPT RESULTS, BUT WE CANNOT STAMPEDE THE SYRIANS INTO ANYTHING BUT A NEGATIVE DECISION. WE SHOULD CONTINUE TO COUNSEL PATIENCE. PELLETREAU

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